John Paton and Urban Mission in Nineteenth-Century Glasgow

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The work of individuals involved in urban mission in nineteenth-century Britain has often been deemed a failure. In the opinion of one writer, nonattendance at religious worship had become a deeply rooted social habit which "no body of evangelists, whether orthodox or heterodox in message, could alter". The assertion appears to be supported by recent local studies of city mission workers, which indicate an apparent failure to see significant fruit from their labours in terms of large numbers of individual conversions.2 To many their activities, especially the practice of domestic visitation by both paid city mission workers, and lay members of churches and chapels, was an intrusive form of piety. At the end of the nineteenth century, the very astute observer of London social and religious life, Charles Booth, recorded a series of negative impressions of the practice - "good visitors are rare", "the unpopularity of the church is partly due to the right claimed of visiting anywhere", and he added "the people bear it with great fortitude".3 To the residents of the less frequented areas of the city, the approach taken by the visitors could be seen as unwelcome, or as simply irrelevant. At the close of a visit to a family in a deprived area of Glasgow in the 1850s, a Protestant minister gave them some religious tracts. When

¹ K.S. Inglis, *Churches and the Working Classes in Victorian History* (London, 1963), 333-4.

² G. Robson, "The Failures of Success: Working Class Evangelists in Early Victorian Birmingham", in ed. D. Baker, Studies in Church History, 15: Biographical and Sociological Problems for the Church Historian (Oxford, 1978), 384, 387-8; see also his Dark Satanic Mills? Religion and Irreligion in Birmingham and the Black Country (Carlisle, 2002), 171-201.

³ C. Booth, *The Life and Labour of the People of London, Third Series, Religious Influences,* vol. 7 (London, 1902), 37-8.

they were asked by another visitor what the tracts were about, their response was simple, "We didna ken; nane o' us could read theem".⁴

Yet the remarkable ubiquity and persistence of both individuals and organisations devoted to the task of urban mission in the nineteenth-century cities suggests that, at least to those actively engaged in it, their work was not an abject failure. The zeal of lay and domestic visitation societies sprang from a conviction that the churches should make direct communication with those who, although living in the streets adjacent to their buildings, were not in the habit of attending their services.⁵ The realisation slowly dawned that the silent invitation of an opened church door was not sufficient incentive to inspire the religiously indifferent to church attendance. The size and extensive nature of the town and city mission movement that burgeoned after 1826, demonstrates the popularity of organised schemes of domestic visitation. 6 Commenting on the work of the mission halls of London (many of which were independent of the town and city mission movement or of other churches), towards the end of the nineteenth century, Charles Booth, noted that they were "more numerous than the churches, and only less numerous than public houses". He believed that the aggregate of mission hall work was enormous, and "a certain degree of success is almost universal, and is found with the small as well as the large missions".7 Workers and their supporters must have believed that in some way the significant quantities of time, money, and manpower being ploughed into domestic visitation were a worthwhile investment. So too did outside observers, for the visitation activities of the city missions spawned imitations

⁴ "Shadow", Midnight Scenes and Social Photographs: Being Sketches of Life in the Streets, Wynds, and Dens of the City (Glasgow, 1858).

⁵ H. D. Rack, "Domestic Visitation: a Chapter in Early Nineteenth Century Evangelism", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, xxiv (1973), 374.

Within four years of its foundation in 1837, the Manchester and Salford Town Mission was employing 55 agents. In 1858, the London City Mission employed 350 paid agents. (Manchester and Salford Town Mission, Annual Report 1841 (Manchester, 1841), 8; D.M. Lewis, Lighten Their Darkness: The Evangelical Mission to Working-Class London, 1828-1860 (New York, 1986), 205.) These numbers may represent institutional success, rather than success in the aims and objectives of the mission.

⁷ C. Booth, Life and Labour, 270-3.

such as the Anglican Scripture Readers' Association.⁸ This article concentrates on one example where urban mission appears to have been a success. This was achieved through the labours of John Paton, an agent of the evangelical Protestant Glasgow City Mission between the years of 1850 and 1857.

The Glasgow City Mission, or more fully, The Society for Promoting the Religious Interests of the Poor of Glasgow and its Vicinity lays claim to being the first city mission in the world. It was started in 1826 by the inspirational and restless genius of David Nasmith, who went on to found a string of town and city missions both in Britain and overseas.9 These included Dublin (1828), New York (1830), and London (1835). Some of the smaller town missions were short lived, hastily planned and established without secure foundations. Others, such as the London City Mission, became bastions of evangelicalism. That the Glasgow City Mission was formed within two years of the end of Thomas Chalmers' famous parochial labours in the Tron and St John's parishes in central Glasgow, is no coincidence. 10 There are a number of similarities between Chalmers' approach to the urban environment, as set out in his Right Christian and Civic economy for a Nation With More Special Reference to its Large Towns (1821), and David Nasmith's city mission scheme. Chalmers emphasised the importance of the principle of "locality" for workers in urban areas, and the Glasgow City Mission scheme placed its workers in territorially defined locations, upon which they were to concentrate the whole of their efforts. Chalmers and Nasmith both urged the importance of domestic visitation, the purpose of which was to be primarily spiritual. A significant role for education, especially Sunday schools, and a willingness to use non-ecclesiastical buildings, were features common to both schemes.

On the Scripture Readers' Association, as an Anglican response to the city missions See Lewis, *Lighten Their Darkness*, 107-17.

⁹ The main source for information on David Nasmith is J. Campbell, *Memoirs of David Nasmith* (London, 1844).

On the links between Thomas Chalmers and the Glasgow City Mission see I.J. Shaw, "Thomas Chalmers, David Nasmith, and the Origins of the City Mission Movement", *Evangelical Quarterly*, vol. lxxvi, No. 1 (Jan 2004).

Although the Glasgow City Mission was a voluntary society, dependent upon, and to a degree fostering, denominational pluralism, Chalmers declared in a sermon he preached on its behalf, "I know not a likelier expedient under Providence, for working a great Christian reformation on a people to whom the word of the ordinances of Christianity have hithertofore been in great measure unknown".¹¹

Nasmith's city mission scheme proved remarkably popular. In 1827 the Glasgow City Mission had ten agents, and by 1828 the number was 20. 12 At the time Paton joined its ranks, the mission was enjoying a period of rapid growth and extension of influence after years of more modest progress: the thirty agents of 1851 had become fifty-five by 1857. Other agencies were similarly flourishing: the Manchester City Mission, grew from 20 agents in 1837 and an income of just over £1800, to 72 agents and an income of £6791 in 1886. 13 The London City Mission, which notably succeeded in attracting Anglican support, had 101 workers in 1844, and 328 workers in 1860, and claimed to have made 1,484,563 visits and distributed 2,092,854 tracts. 14 Although there has been some detailed study of the work of the domestic city missionary in England, 15 less attention has been paid to Scotland, where there were significant variations from the pattern adopted south of the border.

John Gibson Paton belongs to that celebrated group of missionary "heroes" of the nineteenth century, whose lives have been subsequently recounted in spiritual biographies. He is most famous for his missionary endeavours in the New Hebrides (now Vanuatu), and he became a noted speaker and

T. Chalmers, Sermon of October 1827, quoted in *Annual Report of Glasgow City Mission*, 1829 (Glasgow, 1829), Appendix, 33.

¹² The Glasgow City Mission: A Short History (Glasgow, 1926), 24.

Fourth Annual Report of the Manchester and Salford Town Mission (Manchester, 1841), 9.

D. Lewis, Lighten Their Darkness, 120-8.

E.g. D. Lewis, *Lighten Their Darkness*, on London; and G Robson, "The Failures of Success", on Birmingham.

missionary statesman in both Britain and Australia. The Baptist preacher C.H. Spurgeon dubbed him "king of the cannibals". A less well known, but nonetheless significantly formative, part of Paton's life was spent in the service of the Glasgow City Mission in the 1850s. His response to the local urban subculture of the East End of Glasgow proved most significant.

He was born in 1824 at Braehead, near Dumfries, the eldest of 11 children. His father, James Paton, a small-scale stocking frame weaver, had chosen to join the Reformed Presbyterian Church, believing it to be closest to the Covenanting heritage. James Paton had an unfulfilled ambition to be a minister of the gospel, but his only outlet for such aspirations was the last 12 years of his life spent as a Colporteur for the Tract and Book Society of Scotland. He was a revered figure in the district, and three of his sons were to be called into Christian ministry.¹⁷

In many ways John Paton was the classic Scottish "lad o' pairts", a young man of humble origins helped by his parents and his own assiduous efforts to pay his way through school and university, and by virtue of academic gifting able to aspire to a higher social status. ¹⁸ Although resolved ultimately on becoming a minister, John Paton had to leave school at the age of 12, and he struggled to complete his education whilst engaged in a variety of occupations. Eventually in his early twenties he moved to Glasgow as a District Visitor for the West Campbell Street Reformed Presbyterian congregation, at a salary of £25, with a year of training at the Free Church Normal Seminary included. ¹⁹ He subsequently worked as a teacher in Maryhill Free Church School, before becoming an agent of the Glasgow

¹⁶ J. Cromarty, King of the Cannibals: The Story of John G. Paton, Missionary to the New Hebrides (Darlington, 1997), 2734.

J.G. Paton, John Paton, D.D. Missionary to the New Hebrides: An Autobiography Edited by His Brother the Rev. James Paton, B.A. and a Brief Biographical Sketch of His Later Years and Farewell, by A.K. Longridge (London, 1919), 318.

On the development of the mythology of the "lad o' pairts" see R.D. Anderson, "In Search of the 'Lad o' Pairts', The Mythical History of Scottish Education", *History Workshop*, 19 (1985).

Paton Autobiography, 24-7. (The salary had been initially offered at £50, but was split between two able candidates who shared the role. Both had to abandon the work through ill health, in which poverty was a contributory part.)

City Mission, at a salary of £40 per annum, in the Green Street District of Calton.²⁰

Paton would have felt acutely the contrast between the rural Dumfriesshire of his childhood, and Glasgow of the mid-nineteenth century. Observers focussed not only on the industry of the city, but also the problems of congestion, disease, deprivation and depravity. Lord Ashley commented in 1839, "I did not believe until I had visited the wynds of Glasgow that so large an amount of filth, crime, misery and disease existed in one spot in a civilised country.... Health would not be possible in such a climate; the air tainted by exhalations from the most stinking and stagnant sources, a pavement never dry... is moral propriety and moral cleanliness, so to speak, more probable? Quite the reverse."21 Based on his observations in 1840. the sanitary reformer Edwin Chadwick came to similar conclusions, "The structural arrangements and condition of the population in Glasgow was the worst of any kind we had seen in any part of Great Britain". He was shocked to find that among children in some wynds many did not even appear to have names.²² The perennial problem of overcrowding in Glasgow was acute - as many as one third of families lived in homes of only one room. It is no surprise that the annual death rate rose from an average of 25 per thousand in the 1820s, to 39.9 per thousand in the years 1845–49, including a high point of 56 per thousand in 1847. Bad sanitation, lack of clean water, overcrowding, expensive food, and virulent disease reaped a grim toll. It was amongst children that the cost was heaviest: in 1861 54% of deaths were of children aged under 10.23 In 1848-49 cholera claimed 3,777 lives in the city. The cost of poor relief soared from £6900 in 1846 to some £14,000 in 1848.24

Paton Autobiography, 24-32.

Lord Ashley, 1839, quoted in S. Laidlaw, *Glasgow Common Lodging Houses* and the People Living in them (Glasgow, 1956), 20-1.

E. Chadwick, Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain, 1842, (Edinburgh, 1842), repr. ed. M. W. Flinn (1965), 99, 198.

M. Flinn, ed., Scottish Population History from the Seventeenth Century to the 1930s (Cambridge, 1977), 19-20; 377, 379; T.C. Smout, A Century of the Scottish People, 1830-50 (London, 1986), 33, 49.

²⁴ J.E. Handley, *The Irish in Scotland*, 1798-1845 (Cork, 1943), 28-9.

In its moral and religious character, Glasgow was a place of stark contrasts. The Sabbath was strictly observed, especially by the middle and upper classes, yet away from the main thoroughfares in the hidden closes and wynds an observer noted a "Babel of noises – oaths, recriminations, and abuse", the same as those to be heard on any other day, although perhaps in more subdued tones. One German traveller called Glasgow "the most religious and the most drunken city in Europe", another spoke of witnessing "Augean pandemonium" and believed that no town or city presented "anything one-half so bad, either in intensity of pestilence, physical or moral, or in extent proportioned to population". The 1851 Religious Census calculated that 44.82% of Glasgow's population of 329,097 had attended religious services on the Sunday of the census, a high level compared to the 33.64% recorded in Manchester, but low compared to the 60.67% for Scotland as a whole.

Situated to the east of Glasgow City Centre, adjacent to the scene of Thomas Chalmers' parochial labours earlier in the century, Calton was an area of significant social and spiritual deprivation. It was one of the twenty districts in which the Glasgow City Mission had been operating from as early as 1828, although the part of Calton allocated to John Paton was a new field of labour.²⁸ Local poverty was acute, and living conditions could be appalling. In 1853 a Glasgow City Mission worker reported that each January a third of the population were forced to move house, mostly because of rent arrears;²⁹ in one rookery on Orr Street, Calton, 138 houses shared just one midden.³⁰ Crime flourished: one observer of Glasgow life in the 1850s noted that the wynds of Calton were to be ranked alongside those of the Trongate and Argyle Street, in central Glasgow, for their "dens of infamy", with thousands of inmates occupied with "Riot, drunkenness, theft

²⁵ "Shadow", Midnight Scenes, 17.

²⁶ "Shadow", *Midnight Scenes*, quoting the views of Mr Kohl, and J.C. Symons, 99, 115.

Quoted in C. Brown, "Religion and the Development of an Urban Society: Glasgow 1780-1914" (Glasgow University Ph.D. Thesis, 1981), 200-1.

Short History, 25, and Paton Autobiography, 33.

²⁹ Glasgow City Mission Annual Report, 1853 (Glasgow, 1853), 16.

Handley, Irish in Scotland, 151.

and profligacy of every kind". Such wynds and closes were a nether world, rarely visited by non-residents, hidden away behind the more affluent houses and shops which lined the main roads. ³²

Irish immigration had a significant impact on Calton. Handloom weaving dominated the area, and attracted many migrants who needed little capital outlay to enter an occupation that was fairly easy to learn. However, the days of the handloom weaver were numbered. The 84,500 handloom weavers found in Scotland in 1840 had been reduced to just 4,000 in 1880 as the industry declined. With an over-supply of labour, wages for handloom weaving in the 1830s fell below the 7s. considered the subsistence level, to 5s. 8d., of which 2s. was expended on rent. ³³ The acute poverty which followed was observed by a local Episcopalian minister in the late 1830s, "I have seen the husband and father obliged to strip a comfortable dwelling for food... I have even known individuals of a family trying to support existence on a potato a day". ³⁴

Large numbers of Calton's population retained a strong Irish identity: one area was nicknamed "Connaught Square", other groups spoke only Gaelic.³⁵ The area in which Paton was to work was also an area of low church attendance. Norman Murray suggested that religious observance amongst Scottish handloom weavers fell away after 1815, a trend in which poverty and the lack of decent clothes in which to attend worship were contributory factors. ³⁶ The accounts of Glasgow City missioners appear to bear this out. One mission agent reported that in a close of 30 families, only one person was a regular churchgoer, and they were denounced as a "hypocrite" by their neighbours; another in the West End of Calton reported

[&]quot;Shadow", Midnight Scenes, 94.

³² Chadwick, Sanitary Condition, 397

N. Murray, The Scottish Handloom Weavers 1790-1850: A Social History (Edinburgh, 1978), 21, 23, 99, 109.

D. Aitchison, A Charity Sermon Preached at Christ Church, Glasgow (Glasgow, 1838), 11, quoted in R. Strong, Episcopalianism in Nineteenth-Century Scotland: Religious Responses to a Modernising Society (Oxford, 2002), 202.

³⁵ Handley, Irish in Scotland, 228.

Murray, Handloom Weavers, 166-67.

that of 269 families, only 51 maintained any form of church attendance.³⁷ Many local residents had not attended church, or been visited by a minister or church visitor, for up to twenty years.³⁸

John Paton was formally received as an agent of the society in March 1850.39 His appointment came only after a rigorous selection process which included supplying a written statement of his Christian experience and doctrinal views, an interview, a trial of four hours' visitation accompanied by two directors of the mission, and preaching a discourse at a mission meeting where a deputation of directors was present. Although the Directors exercised a strongly controlling hand on the operation of the agents, Paton revered them as "men of God, adapted and qualified for this special work, and very helpful in counsel". 40 It was common practice for those studying for ministry in a range of Scottish denominations to complete an arts degree at university, before undertaking training in the theological hall of their own denomination. Whilst John Paton worked as a City Missioner he studied at Glasgow University, then at the Reformed Presbyterian Divinity Hall. With overseas missionary service in mind he also attended medical classes at the Andersonian College. His studies occupied a period of some 10 years.⁴¹ In his mid twenties, an aspiring young man who had come to the city with his heart set on training for Christian ministry, with practical experience of Sunday School teaching and tract distribution behind him, Paton possessed the attributes required of a city mission agent in Scotland.

³⁷ Glasgow City Mission Annual Report, 1848 (Glasgow, 1848), 18.

Paton Autobiography, 33.

Glasgow City Mission Archives, Glasgow, Glasgow City Mission Minute Book 4, 19 March 1850. Paton's *Autobiography* (p. 32) gives the date of his commencement as 1847. The discrepancy is unexplained, unless 1847 was the date of initial interest in the Mission, whilst Paton was working at the Maryhill School.

⁴⁰ Paton Autobiography, 51.

The Reformed Presbyterian Church ministerial training course covered 5 years. The sessions were of 8 weeks each autumn. After 1854 the classes were held at Great Hamilton Street Reformed Presbyterian Church, where Paton worshipped, when the minister Dr Symington was appointed Professor of Systematic theology. It was a small concern, with just 14 students in 1857, and an income of £136-10-2 (Reformed Presbyterian Magazine (June 1857), 186, 206).

He was willing to eke out a meagre subsistence through employment with the mission, believing that such work was ideal training for students aspiring to the office of ministry, "preparing us to deal with men of every shade of thought and character and to lead them to the knowledge and service of the Lord Jesus." ⁴²

This policy of employing ministerial students in the work of the city mission was adopted from the very beginnings of the work: in 1827 David Nasmith reported to Thomas Chalmers that the Glasgow City Mission had ten agents, of whom five were "preachers of the gospel", and five were students for the ministry.⁴³ This urban mission experience was seen as a valuable adjunct to their theological training. In addition to the divinity students at Glasgow University, there were also, in the city in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, students from at least six denominational divinity and theological halls.⁴⁴ This practice of using of ministerial students was very different from that found in the English city missions, where agents were sought from social groupings similar to those amongst whom they would be labouring, and serious endeavours were made to ensure that city mission work was not a back-door method of entry into the ranks of the clergy. In the London City Mission, the majority of the agents were from the working classes, and had been engaged in manual labour. 45 Local Scottish conditions dictated a quite different policy. One Scottish city mission agent, although enduring great poverty during the period of his studies, believed he reaped the benefit of advanced theological education in his daily work when dealing with "shrewd men, who could put knotty questions"

Paton Autobiography, 32-3.

New College Library, Edinburgh, Letter of David Nasmith to Thomas Chalmers, 1827, Chalmers MSS, CHA 4. 82. 4.

W.I.P. Hazlett, ed., Traditions of Theology in Glasgow: A Miscellany (Edinburgh, 1993), and D. Wright, "Education, Theological", Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology (Edinburgh, 1993), 280-285; J. Blumenreich, The Missionary: His Trials and Triumphs. Being Nine Years' Experience in the Wynds and Closes of Edinburgh (Edinburgh, 1864), 65-6. Although lasting up to five years, the period of formal teaching was often for only a few months each year.

Lewis, Lighten Their Darkness, 121, 126.

which he had previously struggled to answer. ⁴⁶ The employment of ministerial students led to a high turn-over of personnel. Between January 1849 and January 1850, eleven out of thirty-one agents left the mission. ⁴⁷

John Paton's city mission work was conducted in conjunction with the Great Hamilton Street Reformed Presbyterian Church, which was adjacent to his district in Calton. This was the premier Reformed Presbyterian Church of the day, and had flourished under the ministry of Dr William Symington. He had built the church up from a membership of some three hundred to one numbering around a thousand. In 1854 Symington added to his duties that of professor of his denomination's Divinity Hall, and a part of the Great Hamilton Street Church premises was converted to hold the classes during the term time, 8 weeks each autumn. The church had been seeking a local missionary since 1847, and Matthew Fairley, an elder in the congregation, guaranteed half of Paton's salary for two years. Although well attended, the church carried a significant debt, and finance was a pressing problem. In these circumstances the auxiliary offices of the city mission were important.

Paton's approach to mission in the Calton area demonstrates the endeavour of the town and city missionaries to present the Christian message in a contextually appropriate manner. Added to his evident ability to communicate his message to the working classes, was a ready appreciation of the need to secure the active support of those amongst whom he was ministering if he was to extend the influence of his work. Paton's local

This agent of the Edinburgh City Mission, who was studying in Edinburgh, recalled doing his studies in the kitchen, on a baking board balanced on a meal barrel! (Blumenreich, *Missionary Trials and Triumphs*, 66-7).

Glasgow City Mission, Minute Book 4, January 1849 – January 1850.

T. Binnie, Sketch of the First Reformed Presbyterian Congregation, Now the Great Hamilton Street Free Church, Glasgow (Paisley, 1888). There were just 5866 members in the whole Reformed Presbyterian denomination in 1856 (R. Currie, Churches and Churchgoers: Patterns of Church Growth in the British Isles Since 1700 (Oxford, 1977), 132).

Paton Autobiography, 33; and Strathclyde Regional Archives, Mitchell Library CH3/158/2, Great Hamilton Street, Reformed Presbyterian Church, Session Minutes 1841–55, Session Meeting 4 Oct. 1847.

adherents were brought to see that they had a vested interest in their missionary, and the success of his work. The building of personal relationships with those in the local community was widely recognised by those of an evangelical persuasion engaged in urban parish ministry. When Andrew Bonar moved to his Free Church charge in the Finnieston district of Glasgow he noted "It will take all 1857 to know the faces and the ways of the people of my district, and till I thus know them I can scarcely expect to see many of them come to church". D. MacColl, who worked in the Wynds of Glasgow, urged the importance of genuine sympathy for the urban poor, and lamented that many who laboured publicly in their midst, privately actually "despised" them. 51

Although it has been argued that there was surprisingly little anticlericalism in Scotland in the period,⁵² this phenomenon does appear to have been one of the challenges the Glasgow city missioners faced from the urban population in the 1850s. Efforts at tract distribution could be unwelcome, as the rebuff delivered to one distributor indicated:"We ha'e owre muckle o' them here". ⁵³ Another mission worker recorded a visit to a "socialist" in 1850, from whom he received short shrift, "you ministers and missionaries are a set of imposters, and much worse than others are". He added that he would rather have "a glass of whisky than all the religion in the world". ⁵⁴ Another missionary visited a meeting of sceptics, and heard declamations against "the clergy, oppression by the rich and great, and the need of a change of government". ⁵⁵ Such hostility was not to be overcome

⁵⁰ A. Bonar, *Diary and Life* (1893, repr. Edinburgh, 1984), 174.

D. MacColl, Among the Masses; or, Work in the Wynds (Glasgow, 1867), 135.

⁵² C.G. Brown, "Rotavating the Kailyard: Re-Imagining the Scottish 'Meenister' in Discourse and the Parish State Since 1707", in N. Aston and M. Cragoe, *Anticlericalism in Britain c. 1500-1914* (Stroud, 2000), 138-58. Brown argues that "With no apostolic succession, with annually changing moderators, with no head of the Church but Christ and with a hotly disputed system of ministerial appointment, Scottish Presbyterianism conferred upon all its clergy – whether of Establishment or Dissent – a vulnerability surely rarely matched in Christendom". (p. 155)

⁵³ "Shadow", Midnight Scenes, 19.

⁵⁴ GCM Annual Report, 1850, 12.

⁵⁵ GCM Annual Report, 1853, 14.

instantly, and the policy of engendering a spirit of mutual co-operation took time to develop.

After attracting just six or seven hearers to his weekly meetings in his first year of work, the directors of the Glasgow City Mission suggested Paton be moved to a different field. He instead pleaded for a further six months, and set the case before his small band of hearers. They responded to his challenge, and each agreed to bring a visitor to the next service. Quickly the project took off, and soon those attending became too many to be contained in the house in which they were meeting. Further meetings suited to local need were started – Bible class, singing class, communicants' class, Total Abstinence Society – indeed Paton ran some form of class or Bible study every night of the week, and two meetings on the Sabbath. A ministry to the local police was begun, with prayer meetings specially for the Calton division.⁵⁶

Charles Booth believed that the "active virtue" of missions in late nineteenth-century London, lay in their "enthusiasm", and the strongly shaping influence of one person's individuality. Many workers started out "with highly strung expectations based partly upon the natural exaltation of self-sacrifice". This was clearly the case with John Paton; his personal commitment was huge, his ideals high. He was soon far in excess of the four hours work per day the mission required of him. On a Sunday he was up at 6 o'clock knocking on doors, and rousing the careless. Over time he trained eight or ten young men, and about twenty young women, to be volunteer visitors and tract distributors, which increased their personal commitment to the work. In twos they visited parts of the area each month. At a monthly meeting reports were given, and matters of interest or concern

Paton Autobiography, 34-5. The need for such a ministry among the Glasgow police was noted by the Glasgow social observer "Shadow" in 1858. He urged they should be given "moral training", rather than simply "frightening, crushing, or dragging out of the moral cess-pools of society the madly depraved and criminal". An honourable exception was Captain Smart, the "able and gentlemanly" Superintendent of Police. ("Shadow", *Midnight Scenes*, 94-8, 107).

⁵⁷ C. Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London, Third Series: Religious Influence*, vol. 7: Summary, 278.

discussed. The importance of personal invitation to church or mission from a local adherent to the cause was stressed by MacColl in his work in the Glasgow wynds, as was persistence – some needed to be asked "scores of times". ⁵⁸ In the success of Paton, a properly trained and utilised lay, working-class agency was similarly essential. He ensured that resources at his disposal were administered well, and responsibility delegated. Such committed work bore fruit. Some six hundred people regularly began to attend the weekly meetings, consisting mainly of poor working people and millworkers, although many of these later removed to more respectable areas where they joined local churches. The support of local employers was also harnessed, and they were encouraged to provide employment to "deserving" persons recommended by Paton. ⁵⁹

The ministry of Paton reached a significantly low stratum of society. The Sabbath School Bible class was attended by 70 – 100 young adults, "all without bonnets, and some with no shoes". Whilst Paton noted that conversion often brought with it evidence of improved dress and personal habit, he also observed that many made a point of continuing to attend the Bible class in working clothes, in order not to discourage others of their class from attending. This empathy with the social situation of those in the immediate area was more possible in the mission hall situation, than with the more formal religious structures of the local churches. In 1858 the Glasgow social observer "Shadow" noted that for the churches, "persons of vicious habits have no sympathy". He attributed this to alienating factors such as their "shabby garments", and the churches' "outward prejudice". The capacity of Roman Catholic churches in Glasgow to retain the adherence of the working-class Irish has been partly attributed to the acceptability of

⁵⁸ MacColl, Work in Wynds, 135.

Paton Autobiography, 37-40. Andrew Bonar attracted an "unusually large band of helpers" in his work in Finnieston, Glasgow, and in the slums of Edinburgh John Blumenreich similarly gathered around him local inhabitants to support his work, believing them to be a most effective agency. (Bonar, Diary, 182-3, Blumenreich, Missionary Trials and Triumphs, 132-3).

⁶⁰ Paton Autobiography, 36-7.

[&]quot;Shadow", Midnight Scenes, 34.

wearing working clothes to the services, together with the strong sense of community which they created. ⁶² A number of other Protestant churches in Glasgow were conscious of this problem at the time, and introduced evening services for those in working clothes. ⁶³

On summer evenings and Saturday afternoons open air preaching and total abstinence meetings were held in Calton. Again the lay attenders of the Paton's mission took a key role, inviting friends, and singing in a mission choir which generally attracted a good crowd. Some local opposition was encountered, but the police were generally supportive of the continuance of the meetings.⁶⁴ The strategy was probably more appropriate than simply distributing tracts wholesale, but it was not without risk. The social situation in central Glasgow was often volatile. Paton wisely avoided Saturday evenings, when extensive consumption of alcohol fuelled much disorder and crime. A city missionary attempting open-air preaching in Edinburgh's Cowgate area at the time found himself pelted with cabbages and rotten eggs, before being knocked to the ground and having vitriol poured on him. which burned his clothing and face.65 A measure of Paton's success in winning the affection and support of the local people is indicated by the farewell soirée conducted for him in the Green Street Mission premises on his departure for the overseas mission field in 1858. At this between seven and eight hundred persons "belonging to the district" were present. 66

As with other Protestant evangelicals engaged in urban mission in the mid-nineteenth century, key areas of concern to John Paton were

⁶² Murray, Scottish Handloom Weavers, 166-67.

E.g. MacColl, Work in the Wynds, 136. On Norman MacLeod's practice in the Martyrs and Barony churches see D. MacLeod, Memoir of Norman MacLeod, D.D. vol. ii (London, 1876), 57-61.

Paton Autobiography, 40-41. Paton's enthusiasm for this work contrasts with that of Edward Derrington, a town missionary employed by the Carrs Lane Independent Chapel, Birmingham. Derrington constantly reiterated in his journal his preference for the sanctuary service over open air evangelism. (Journal of E. Derrington, 9 November 1838, quoted in Robson, "Failures of Success", 384).

Blumenreich, Missionary Trials and Triumphs, 60-1.

⁶⁶ Reformed Presbyterian Church Magazine, May 1857, 163.

intemperance, ignorance, irreligion and Roman Catholicism. 67 Alcohol was a dominant part of urban working-class culture in Glasgow. The temperance campaigner William Collins believed it had "struck its fibrous roots into everything so deeply, that to tear up the spirit drinking practices is like tearing up the whole social system of society". 68 In 1850, Glasgow recorded 15,751 cases of drunkenness, or one case for every 22 of the population.⁶⁹ Resort to excessive consumption of alcohol was more than simply selfish over-indulgence, but was a way of escape from a dull, monotonous life in a dark and desperately overcrowded home, often comprising only one room, surrounded by children, drying washing, and the pressures of domestic life. In Glasgow there was a regular pattern to the drinking week. Saturday, being pay day, was when most alcohol was consumed. The sale of alcohol was restricted on Sundays, so Monday became a day of compensatory indulgence, with less drink consumed in the later part of the week as the weekly wages were used up. 70 Holiday periods were occasions for excessive drinking. In 1853 the Glasgow Herald carried a report of the scene on Glasgow Green in the aftermath of Glasgow Fair: "Groups of excited men were fighting here and there; scores were zig-zagging along, in a state of tipsy exaltation, and no small number of human forms lay in the kennel, in a state of swinish beatitude... altogether, Saturday was the roughest night in the drinking way, which has been experienced in Glasgow for a long time".71

Paton was convinced that temperance was an inadequate response to alcohol abuse, and he advocated total abstinence, based on his personal

The issues are highlighted further in P. Hillis, "Education and Evangelisation Presbyterian Missions in Mid-Nineteenth Century Glasgow", *Scottish Historical Review*, vol. 66, 1: no. 181 (April 1987), 51. Similar concerns in the London City Mission are discussed in D. Lewis, *Lighten Their Darkness*, 60-78.

W. Collins, in *Parliamentary Papers*, 1834, viii, 139, quoted in E. King, *Scotland Sober and Free: The Temperance Movement 1829-1979* (Glasgow, 1979), 6.

⁶⁹ Handley, Irish in Scotland, 160.

[&]quot;Shadow", *Midnight Scenes*. The work traces the pattern of drinking day by day through the week. For Sunday drinking habits see 11-33; for Saturday 98-100.

Glasgow Herald, 18 July 1853.

example. Without this he believed it was impossible to gain a hearing from those who were alcohol dependent. He also opposed the use of tobacco. The was a view widely held among the Glasgow City Mission workers that drunkenness was inseparable from vice, immorality, criminality and poverty. City missionaries were frustrated to find that their efforts to provide simple poor relief were thwarted by excessive alcohol consumption amongst those they sought to help; clothes left for children would often be pawned for drink. One concluded that in general "extreme poverty is to be attributed to the love of strong drink". The sale of alcohol on the Sabbath, and instances of drunkenness on that day, were a cause of particular concern to mission workers. With one public house for every 30 inhabitants of Glasgow, it is no surprise that some of Paton's strongest opponents were local publicans fearful of a loss of trade.

The efforts of the city missions were aided by the Licensing (Scotland) Act of 1853 which closed public houses at 11 p.m., and on Sundays, and by significant increases in the duty on spirit in the 1850s. The more moderate temperance movement had initially been promoted by some working-class leaders as a method of self-improvement, and was taken up strongly by evangelicals such as William Collins. ⁷⁶ Paton's teetotal solution to the abuse of alcohol was a radical stance which was not universally shared amongst evangelical Presbyterians, although attitudes were changing: by 1853, 150 United Presbyterian and 100 Free Church ministers were abstainers. The ability of the campaign against drink to successfully cross sectarian lines is notable: when the Franciscan temperance campaigner

⁷² Paton Autobiography, 38-9.

⁷³ Blumenreich, Missionary Trials and Triumphs, 167-8, 185.

Glasgow City Mission Annual Report, 1850 (Glasgow, 1850), 13-14.

⁷⁵ Handley, Irish in Scotland, 160.

On temperance and teetotalism in Scotland see King, Scotland Sober and Free, especially 8-23. The link between the temperance movement and the Glasgow City Mission was strong. Amongst the first subscribers to the City Mission were Robert Kettle (1761-1852), President of the Glasgow Abstinence Society and later President of the Scottish Temperance League; and George Gallie, a Glasgow bookseller who became a leading publisher of temperance propaganda.

Father Theobald Mathew visited Glasgow Green in 1842, he was greeted by a crowd of 50,000 people, and was joined by Protestant clergy at a soirée at the City Hall.⁷⁷

Prostitution was believed to be a problem closely linked to that of alcohol abuse. As one Glasgow minister commented "The miserable daughters of immodesty, who haunt and infest our streets, are almost all devotees of Bacchus". Based upon information he had gained whilst working as a Glasgow City Missionary, William Logan wrote a detailed and perceptive study of Glasgow prostitution. His work frequently took him to the Lock Hospital, the Magadalene Institution, and the Central Police Office, and he reckoned that there were some 2000 prostitutes in Glasgow in 1849. Logan classified the different types of brothels in the city from first to third class, according to the status of their clients. He also estimated that a quarter of young men had paid for the services of a prostitute.⁷⁸ City missionaries were prepared to attempt evangelism amongst prostitutes, although they saw little tangible fruit from their work. In 1850 one recorded of the houses he had visited that day, all "were brothels. Some of them presented scenes the most disgusting ... when there are men present, the females are disposed to be rude and uncivil".79

Although they considered them to be becoming rarer, cases of outright religious unbelief were still being encountered by city missionaries in the 1850s. One sceptic declared that God was "the author of the greatest cruelties, in commanding the destruction of the heathen nations by the Israelites".⁸⁰ Paton held meetings at which lectures on the subjects of

Handley, The Irish in Scotland, 247-8.

W. Logan, The Great Social Evil: Its Causes, Extent, Results, and Remedies (London, 1871), 61, 52, 75, 107-10. This was based upon his earlier works An Exposure of Female Prostitution in London, Leeds, Rochdale, and Especially Glasgow; With Remarks on the Causes, Extent, Results, and Remedy of the Evil (Glasgow, 1843); and The Moral Statistics of Glasgow (Glasgow, 1849). After completing his service with the Glasgow City Mission, Logan went on to open temperance, dining and coffee rooms.

⁷⁹ GCM, Annual Report 1850, 13.

⁸⁰ GCM Annual Report, 1853, 14.

unbelief were offered, followed by open discussion. In his *Autobiography* he recounts the story of an "infidel lecturer" he visited who was seriously ill. Fearing death, the man professed conversion, and burned his circulating library of atheistic literature.⁸¹ Paton also dramatically records the death of another atheist, who cursed and raged against God, tearing his bed clothes to pieces. He died whilst chained to his iron bed, foaming and blaspheming.⁸² To the city missionary such accounts were illustrative of the consequences of unbelief and blasphemy, and possible alternative explanations, such as underlying mental illness, are not explored.

Roman Catholics were another group who attracted the specific attention of the city missionaries, and Paton was no exception. During the early part of the nineteenth century the small Roman Catholic community in Glasgow was not perceived as a threat by Protestants, and was often well assimilated. In 1817, local businessmen were prepared to sponsor a Catholic schools society, and some supported Catholic Emancipation, although the largest number of Scottish petitions against the measure emanated from the West of Scotland. ⁸³

Large scale migration from Ireland began to boost the local Catholic population, a trend fuelled by the Irish famine in the years after 1845. By 1851, 18.2% of the population of Glasgow had been born in Ireland. The Religious Census of that year put attendances at Roman Catholic worship at 23,400, or 15.91% of the total in the city, although the *Catholic Directory* estimated Glasgow's Catholic population as 50,000. 84 Irish migrants began

Paton Autobiography, 43.

lbid., 44. The account appears intended to serve as a warning to blasphemers, and other potential causes for the man's behaviour are not explored.

T. Gallagher, *Glasgow, The Uneasy Peace* (Manchester, 1987), 10-30; I.A. Muirhead, "Catholic Emancipation: Scottish Reactions in 1829, part. 1", *Innes Review*, xxiv (1973), 27-39.

[&]quot;Census of Great Britain 1851: Religious Worship and Education, Scotland", Parliamentary Papers, 1854, lix (London, 1854), 27. (Church of Scotland attendances were given as 29,588 (20.11%); Free Church as 32,273 (21.94%); and United Presbyerian Church as 33,342 (22.67%)); The Directory for the Services of the Catholic Church, for the Clergy and Laity in Scotland (Aberdeen, 1851), 86.

to form a culturally, and often socially, segregated community, viewed by much of the rest of society as unruly and socially unhealthy. Higher rates of crime were reported in areas of Irish settlement, although much was of a petty nature, commonly drunkenness, vagrancy and minor assaults. Immigrants faced opposition on economic grounds: mass migration from Ireland in the 1840s, coincided with economic depression in Scotland, and also the appearance of contagious diseases such as cholera and typhus. Fears rose that the small, self-contained Scottish society might be swallowed up by Irish immigrants. They were considered a threat to job security, public health, and poor relief provision. In 1846 the Glasgow Herald declared "the city of Glasgow is at present overrun with poor". Sectarian tensions rose as Poor Law authorities began to ship back to Ireland immigrants likely to prove a burden on the rates. 85 Already marked out by difference of accent, and cultural practice, the adherence of many to Catholicism became a focus for serious opposition. In 1850 the Scottish Reformation Society was formed, followed in 1854 by the Scottish Protestant Society, which set itself to declare the "anti-scriptural nature of Popery". The first Orange Lodge was formed in Glasgow in 1860. It was a volatile situation: the anti-Catholic sentiment of some preachers could produce a violent response from their hearers. 86 Although the Free Church minister, Rev. D. MacColl, claimed that the content of his sermons was strictly noncontroversial, in 1860 and 1861 elements of the large local Roman Catholic population took exception to his open air preaching, on a stone pulpit he had erected outside his new church in the Bridgegate. Rival sectarian demonstrations were mounted, and the preaching was stopped under interdict by the local authorities, for fear riot would ensue. 87

Although the watchword of the city mission movement was to evangelise not proselytise, Roman Catholics became a focus for the attentions of city

J.F. McCaffrey, "Irish Immigrants and Radical Movements in the West of Scotland in the Early Nineteenth Century", *Innes Review*, xxxix (1998), 56-7.

On Scottish reactions to the Irish during the period see J.F. McCaffrey, "Reactions in Scotland to the Irish Famine", in eds. S.J. Brown and G. Newlands, *Scottish Christianity in the Modern World* (Edinburgh, 2000).

⁸⁷ MacColl, Work in the Wynds, 320-26; 340-46.

missionaries. The commentator "Shadow" believed that Protestant tract distributors were "disseminators of angry feelings, rather than Proselytisers", and if anything brought Protestantism "into greater contempt and scorn". 88 The Glasgow City Mission was keen to assert that Catholics received the visits of the city missionaries with courtesy, and allowed them to read the Bible in their presence. However, in the more volatile atmosphere of the late 1840s and early 1850s, access to homes was more frequently denied. 89

The Roman Catholic Church was strongly represented in Calton, through the work of St Mary's in Abercromby Street, which opened in 1842, with seating for 1,500. A school linked to the church had 700 pupils, and a Sunday School with 300 pupils. Nearby was St Alphonsus Church, on Great Hamilton Street, with 1,000 sittings, and a Sunday School of 300 pupils. 90 John Paton claimed a kind and positive reception amongst this section of the population, but his involvement with one family also led him into deep controversy. After a young Roman Catholic woman professed evangelical conversion under Paton's ministry, she took up residence with a Protestant family. In the volatile sectarian context of the times, such an action appeared provocative, and an attempt was made by her relations to return the young woman to their custody. Under the impression that she would be placed in a nunnery by force, she appealed to Paton for help. His attempt personally to intervene immediately was perhaps unwise, and a riot ensued, to which the police were summoned. When a condemnatory report appeared next day in the papers, accusing Paton (without using his name) of impropriety and foolishness in the matter, he was summoned before the City Mission directors to explain his conduct. After their investigation they offered their full backing for his actions.⁹¹ Nonetheless, the events

^{88 &}quot;Shadow", 35.

⁸⁹ GCM Annual Report, 1852, 10-11; on the impact of the Maynooth controversy see G.F. Millar, "Maynooth and Scottish Politics: The Role of the Maynooth Grant Issue, 1845-57", Scottish Church History Society Records, 27 (1997), 220-279.

⁹⁰ Catholic Directory, 86-89.

North British Daily Mail, 7 Dec. 1852; Glasgow City Mission Minute Book 4, 1 Dec. 1852, 12 Jan. 1853.

inevitably drew down opposition upon Paton from sections of the Catholic community, and there was talk of death threats, with occasional acts of violence. Over time these appear to have passed, and Paton was able to retain the full confidence of the Directors of the mission who shared his Protestant evangelicalism.

It was amongst the lay members of the Great Hamilton Street Church that some of Paton's most redoubtable supporters were to be found. Three were both elders in the church and also Glasgow City Mission directors – Matthew Fairley (a manufacturer), Thomas Binnie (a wealthy builder and quarry owner), and James Reid (who made a fortune in the early years of iron shipbuilding in Glasgow, and part owned a mining company). 93 The latter two had risen from humble beginnings. Although Paton appears to have regarded Dr Symington, with deep reverence and respect, the degree of active support which the minister lent to the work of the city missionary is uncertain. Paton invited Symington to preside at the annual soirée held in his mission area, but the learned preacher was not well received by those present. They were more comfortable with Paton, or the homely plainness of Thomas Binnie, who knew how to communicate with his workforce in the building trade. One visiting minister noted that Binnie "had the art, unconsciously to himself, of speaking to working men with an earnestness and realism that made me quite envious".94 It was clearly a facility that Paton, son of a weaver, also possessed.

Such success was achieved in an area of acute social deprivation. Paton's approach to urban social need does not appear to have been an alienating factor in his dealings with the residents of Calton. He offers little information about how he responded to situations of poverty, although

Paton Autobiography, 50. Paton claimed the woman was subsequently found abandoned by her relatives in great poverty, and later died. Other city missioners were highly robust in their approach. Thomas Finegan, a city missioner in Birmingham was an Irish convert from Roman Catholicism. He was regularly cautioned by his mission managers to avoid controversy, but relished opportunities to debate with Catholics. (Journal of T.A. Finegan, quoted in Robson, "Failures of Success", 385).

⁹³ Binnie, First Reformed Presbyterian Church, 150-4.

Quoted in T. Binnie, *Memoir of Thomas Binnie: Builder in Glasgow* (Glasgow, 1882), 157-8.

on a salary of £40 per annum, he would have little to spare from his personal resources with which to help. In the early years of the Glasgow City Mission, David Nasmith informed Thomas Chalmers that the policy, when the agents encountered poverty, was not to "personally supply the wants of the poor". Instead, they reported cases of need to the directors of the mission, and "others who have them supplied". By these means, Nasmith claimed, many had "their wants supplied, in cloaths [sic], victuals, and cordials".95 In 1852, the emphasis on discriminating charity was still very much in place, together with a stress on the mission as an agency for the operation of other benevolent societies. The mission was not to lose its spiritual focus, and become a relief agency. However, compassion dictated that acute need should not to be ignored. In the winter of 1852, money for coals was given to the missionaries for careful distribution where needed, blankets from Dorcas societies were offered, as were tokens from the Benevolent Society and "Soup tickets". One missionary found a family of ten in one room in a lodging house in horrifying circumstances: one woman was dead, and by her side lay a dying child, two others were gravely ill with fever. The missionary immediately bought food for the starving survivors, arranged for the Poor House to remove the dead body, and made arrangements for the care of the orphaned children. Yet, in the midst of this tragedy, the mission agent did not pass up the opportunity for spiritual counsel, as he reported, "I entreated them then and there to cry to God for mercy in the name of Christ, in the assurance that he would hear and forgive them. I pointed them to the sympathising Jesus, the Friend of sinners". 96

In 1853, at the age of just twenty-nine, Paton was elected an elder of the Great Hamilton Street Reformed Presbyterian Church. His popularity amongst the ordinary church members is plainly evident – of the eight elders elected, he achieved by far the largest vote of 83, with the second name receiving just 57 votes.⁹⁷ He remained active in eldership until his ordination

New College Library, Edinburgh, Letter from David Nasmith to Thomas Chalmers, 16 Sept. 1827, Chalmers MSS, CHA4.82.5.

⁹⁶ GCM Annual Report, 1852, 18-19.

Minute Book of Great Hamilton Street Reformed Presbyterian Church, Elders Minutes, CH3/158/2, Elders Meeting 24 Oct. 1853.

on departure to serve as a missionary in the New Hebrides in 1858. Some impression of the make-up of the Great Hamilton Street congregation can be gained from the Baptismal Register. Over 87% of fathers presenting their children for baptism were skilled artisans or were from the lower levels of the working classes. Indeed, annually the church raised some £100 for the "poor of the congregation", suggesting they were a significant presence. Yet the leadership of the church was dominated by wealthy individuals. Although aspiring to higher things, an impecunious city missionary and ministerial student may have felt somewhat uncomfortable in such company. 100

When in 1857 Paton declared his intention to take up a missionary call to the New Hebrides, he encountered resistance from Dr Symington, who recognised the value of what Paton had been doing in local urban mission, and the church offered him manse and salary to continue with the work. Yet in the attempt to get Paton to stay, the opportunity to work in a more formal ministerial sense was not offered, but only an enhanced local missionary's role. At the time the ageing Symington, burdened with the duties of the Professorship of the Divinity Hall, the pastoral demands of a congregation of over 900 members, and struggling with ill health, had asked

The vast majority were tradesmen, shopkeepers, and skilled artisans. SRA, MS Baptismal Register Great Hamilton Street Reformed Presbyterian Church, CH3/158/9. The statistic is not unusual for Glasgow. Between 1855 and 1865, 78.6% of communicant members of the Barony, Govan and St Stephen's Churches of Scotland were from the working class (P. Hillis, "Education and Evangelisation", 50). See also his "Presbyterianism and Social Class in Mid-Nineteenth Century Glasgow: A Study of Nine Churches", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 32, no. i, January 1981.

⁹⁹ Great Hamilton Street Minute Book, CH3/158/5 – Elders Meeting 11 March 1858. The sum of £104-5-11*d.* had been raised in the previous year.

Hillis found that 33% of Presbyterian elders in mid-ninetecnth century Glasgow came from the "low status" that Paton as divinity student would have occupied, although only 5.1% were from the working class proper. Paton, son of a small scale stocking weaver is depicted by Hillis as using eldership as a stepping stone to higher things, belonging to the "aspirants" or "new shoots" middle class. ("Presbyterianism and Social Class", 50-1).

the elders to appoint for him a colleague and successor. Paton was nearing the end of his studies at the Divinity Hall, and was potentially a candidate for the job, especially when some in the congregation urged a probationer be appointed, rather than translate an existing minister. However, a highly successful city missionary with detailed local knowledge was not what the premier congregation of the Reformed Presbyterian Church had in mind. The social transition from stocking weaver's son to minister of one of Glasgow's leading churches was too great: the man chosen was Dr Symington's son, already serving as a minister in Castle Douglas. 102

Another clearer cause of tension and disappointment for John Paton in his relationship with Great Hamilton Street and its esteemed minister came over the buildings in which much of his mission work was continued. Paton initially held his meetings in a hayloft and local homes, ¹⁰³ but as the mission work developed, the need for a permanent base became clearer. When in 1852 a block of buildings including church, schools and manse on Green Street, Calton, came onto the market, the layman Thomas Binnie persuaded the Great Hamilton Street congregation to purchase it for mission purposes. ¹⁰⁴ This reflected a growing trend in the city missions towards specialisation in the work, and the creation of distinctive mission halls. Agents were deployed in the police office, the slaughter house, and in 1854 a ministry to Glasgow Cabmen was started. In 1853, the erection of a mission hall for the use of the city mission agents in Partick was sanctioned. ¹⁰⁵ Such trends were mirrored in the London City Mission there was a similar increasing specialisation in the work – in 1858, 29 of its 350

Great Hamilton Street Minute Book, Elders Meetings 13 August 1855, etc.

Great Hamilton Street Minutes CH3/158/5 Meeting 3 March 1857. For financial reasons, and owing to reluctance on the younger William Symington's part to move to Glasgow, the call had to be repeated in December 1858, and this time a successful translation was effected (Elders Minute Book, CH3/158/5, Meeting 9 December 1858).

¹⁰³ Paton Autobiography, 34.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 36.

GCM Archives, GCM Minute Book 5, 24 April 1854, 27 September 1854; GCM Annual Report, 1854, 34; GCM Minute Book 5, 27 April 1853. The mission found much difficulty in getting agents to visit the slaughter house.

agents worked with distinctive ethnic or occupational groups, or in specific locations, such as hospitals. The purchase of the Green Street premises helped to consolidate those contacted through domestic visitation into a local community. It also indicated the power and influence of laymen like Binnie, in both local church and city mission. Purchased in 1852, the buildings quickly became the hub of Paton's rapidly developing work. Other parts of the buildings were used for schools run by the Great Hamilton Street Church. 107

This dual function stands in continuity with the emphasis within the Glasgow City Mission of encouraging children into education. In 1848 an agent reported sending 50 children to "a day school in my district, in which they receive gratuitously the elements of sound religious education". Children were directed to Sunday Schools, weekday schools, and into evening schools for the poor. 108 However, the Green Street property was in a poor state of repair, and quickly became financially burdensome to the managers of the Great Hamilton Street Church, and attempts to let parts of the premises proved difficult. 109 Complaints were voiced about unauthorised expenditure being made, and there appears a lack of enthusiasm in important quarters for Paton's mission work. 110 When, of all bodies, a local Episcopalian congregation offered to buy the Green Street property in 1856, a majority of the managers controversially agreed to sell and clear the debt. Two managers, James Reid and Thomas Binnie, also directors of the city mission, then offered to purchase the property themselves for the same price in order to preserve Paton's work. However, on the casting vote of the chairman the management committee decided to proceed with the sale

¹⁰⁶ Lewis, Lighten Their Darkness, 205.

Peter Hillis suggests that the Green Street Schools were free, and almost wholly attended by members of the urban poor. Hillis explores the role of education in the outreach work of churches to the Glasgow poor in his article "Education and Evangelisation".

¹⁰⁸ GCMission Annual Report, 1848, 12.

Great Hamilton Street Reformed Presbyterian Church, Managers Minute Book 1835-63, Strathclyde Regional Archive, Mitchell Library, CH3/158/5, Managers Meeting 30 Aug 1852.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., Managers Meeting 27 Feb. 1854.

of the premises to the Episcopalians, even though some were outraged and complained that selling the building was a surrendering of historic Reformed Presbyterian covenanting principles. Final embarrassment was spared when the Episcopalians withdrew from the purchase. Binnie was then offered the property for £1,000, but now with the upper hand he proposed that the Great Hamilton Street Church itself retain the Green Street premises, and none had the stomach to oppose this. Therefore Paton's work, and its connection with the church was retained. 112

Tensions between Paton's work and some at Great Hamilton Street are revealed in these events. The leading advocate for the Green Street work was not Dr Symington, eminent minister of the congregation and Paton's tutor as Professor of the divinity hall, but the layman Thomas Binnie. His money and influence allowed him to bypass, and outflank the other chapel managers, in the pursuit of his city mission agenda. For all the success he was enjoying, it is not hard to imagine the pressures these events placed on Paton. Within two years he had left his beloved City Mission work, and headed for the overseas mission field.

On Paton's departure it seemed that the Green Street work would come to a close: it was considered too extensive and difficult for a new city mission agent to take on. It was only through a desperate appeal from the City Mission to John Paton's brother Walter, who had offered assistance at Green Street whilst in business in Glasgow, that the work was saved. Under the guidance of Walter Paton and his successor, and with more concerted support from Great Hamilton Street under its new minister, the Green Street work prospered so far as to lead to the formation of a separate congregation of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Calton. 113

Although Dr Symington was the pastor of a thriving urban church, and a keen supporter of urban mission, 114 his failure to communicate effectively

Managers Minutes CH3/158/3, Meeting on 28 Jan. 1856.

Managers Minutes CH3/158/5, Meetings 10, 23 March, and 2 June 1856. The *Paton Autobiography* makes no mention of these tensions.

¹¹³ Paton Autobiography, 59.

Blackwood, "William Symington", 103-26, and D.F. Wright, "William Symington" in ed. D.M. Lewis, *Blackwell Dictionary of Evangelical Biography*, 1730-1860 (Oxford, 1995), vol. ii, 1075.

with the people of the Green Street mission is suggestive of a continuing gulf between urban churches and the non-churchgoing masses who populated the streets of their locality. It was a gulf of which Thomas Chalmers became keenly aware in his extensive visitation of Glasgow, and he sought to bridge it with the army of Sunday School workers and local visitors that he called into action. After 1826 they were joined by ranks of city missionaries who had been inspired by the zeal of Nasmith. The need for this additional work was appreciated by the lay leaders at Great Hamilton Street Church, who were also city mission supporters. Some forty years after Chalmers' endeavours, "Shadow" highlighted the continuing problem of ignorance of serious needs within the immediate vicinity of many churches. He declared that if the congregations of Glasgow churches each Sabbath would visit "for two brief hours, the haunts of vice and the 'homes' of the poor, they would return to the house of God with minds more deeply impressed with the sacredness of life's responsibilities as Christians". "115"

As a city missioner, Paton was one of those who actively sought to remove such barriers of ignorance and indifference, and in this saw some success amongst the residents of Calton. He chose to live locally on Great Hamilton Street, and demonstrated a deep commitment to the personal and spiritual welfare of the local community. Paton gathered a body of workers around him, and centred his work firmly in the locality. As an impecunious ministerial student, and son of a stocking-frame weaver John Paton could feel genuine empathy for the poor residents of Calton. Between Paton and his adherents there developed respect and affection: the Green Street congregation were to become strong supporters of his missionary work in the New Hebrides. Thomas Chalmers' pastoral scheme had rested heavily on the interest, sympathy and co-operation of middle class volunteers. Instead Paton worked with the local populace, and through their own visitation and lay endeavours sought to bridge the gulf of anti-clericalism, and religious alienation, and win a hearing from the unchurched masses of Calton.

Observers from the nineteenth century onwards have questioned whether such an approach could ever work. "Shadow" pointedly asked,

[&]quot;Shadow", Midnight Scenes, 117.

why, if such missionary endeavours were sufficient to put down social evil, did Scotland remain "unparalleled for depravity and destitution". 116 Maybe it happened far less frequently than those engaged in the work of urban mission hoped, but there were locations in which its ultimate goals were achieved. Numbers of individuals who had lapsed, or been altogether alienated, from church attendance, were brought into churches, chapels and missions. Some with serious social problems were "rescued". Examples exist of the establishment of sustainable, contextually well-adapted local churches, achieved through the endeavours of both Protestant and Catholic bodies. John Paton's was not the only case of constructive engagement with the religious needs of those living in urban environment of central and East End Glasgow in this period. The Roman Catholic mission to Glasgow in the 1850s under the confident and imaginative leadership of Peter Forbes was another example. This involved building or buying strategic premises, running Sunday schools and temperance campaigns, together with a host of auxiliary agencies, and proved highly effective in gaining and retaining working-class adherents. 117 Rowan Strong has also highlighted the successful Episcopalian mission in Calton and Bridgeton in the 1830s, led by David Aichison. This was attended by a largely working-class congregation whilst it was meeting in a hall, although the eventual construction of Christ Church, Calton, turned it into a respectable middleclass controlled church. 118 However, both Episcopalian and Catholic missions were to clearly identifiable cultural and religious groups. Aichison's work was with largely Irish immigrants who were either adherents of the Church of Ireland with no local episcopalian church to attend, or who were members of the nearby garrison. The mission of Forbes was directed towards immigrants of Roman Catholic background, who had either lapsed from attendance or who had no local place to attend worship.

[&]quot;Shadow", Midnight Scenes, 137.

B. Aspinwall, "A Glasgow Pastoral Plan, 1855-60: Social and Spiritual Renewal", *Innes Review*, xxxix (1984), 33-36; and Gallagher, *Glasgow, the Uneasy Peace*, 34-47.

R. Strong, *Episcopalianism in Nineteenth-Century Scotland: Religious Responses to a Modernising Society* (Oxford, 2002), 186-203.

Paton's work was amongst those of a less specific background, and as a worker for the Glasgow City Mission he was not able to call on wider denominational resources, although the help of the more affluent classes was not absent. His key resource was people, and through mobilising the members of the local urban community, engaging their interest, sympathy and co-operation, lay working-class leadership was deployed. It was an approach that others in Glasgow were also beginning to adopt. ¹¹⁹ Paton's work proved to be one of the most successful of the Glasgow City Mission, from which a local church was formed. When he left the ranks of the laity, and became an ordained missionary in 1857, ¹²⁰ he was to fulfil another part of Protestant evangelicalism's vision, that of urging the most able candidates to enter overseas missionary service. ¹²¹ In that new role he was to serve with equal distinction.

International Christian College, Glasgow

See MacColl, Work in the Wynds, 168; Bonar, Diary, 182-3.

Glasgow City Mission Annual Report 1857 (Glasgow, 1857), 7.

See S. Piggin and J. Roxborogh, *Thomas Chalmers and the St Andrew's Seven* (Edinburgh, 1985); and J. Roxborogh, *Thomas Chalmers: Enthusiast for Mission*.